

# ECUMENICAL PRESS SERVICE

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## WCC Executive Committee Concludes Five-Day Session

(Geneva) - At the closing session of its five-day meeting in Geneva last week, the Executive Committee of the World Council of Churches made final plans to hold its winter meeting on February 8 - 12, 1960, in Buenos Aires, Argentina. It will be the first major meeting of any of the council's deliberative bodies to be held in Latin America.

Presenting details to the committee, Bishop Sante Uberto Barbieri, Argentine Methodist bishop and one of the WCC's five presidents, said that he hoped the visit of the fourteen member-committee would lead to better understanding of the ecumenical movement and the World Council of Churches in South America, where evangelical and Orthodox churches are growing rapidly.

The bishop asked members of the Executive to accept speaking engagements in many Latin American countries in connection with the World Council meeting. Consultations will be held with leaders of evangelical and Orthodox churches in Buenos Aires and, on a smaller scale, in Brazil.

Arrangements were also outlined for holding the meeting of the WCC's ninety-member Central Committee in the University of St. Andrew's, Scotland, August 16 - 25, 1960. The meetings in Scotland will be associated with the special Edinburgh

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commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the first World Missionary Conference held in that city in 1910, a year usually regarded as the first main milestone in the modern Christian unity movement.

The 1959 meeting of the Central Committee is on the Greek island of Rhodes, August 19 - 29.

In other action, the Executive Committee, at its sessions, February 9 - 13:

APPROVED development of detailed plans and specifications for the first stages of a new WCC headquarters near the United Nations building in Geneva and authorised preparation of a generally acceptable project for a centrally placed chapel.

RECEIVED a report from Dr. H.H. Wolf, director of the World Council of Churches' Ecumenical Institute, on a two-man WCC "fraternal visit" last week to the Church of Cyprus. Dr. Wolf was accompanied by Bishop John Cullberg of the Church of Sweden. Speaking at a press conference on February 12, Dr. W.A. Visser 't Hooft, WCC general secretary, said that "we are glad that we showed the Church of Cyprus the great interest we have for a sister church with its archbishop in exile. The Executive Committee expressed hopes for the early return of Archbishop Makarios to Cyprus.

ADOPTED a statement urging the cessation of atomic tests, which was delivered to the heads of the British, American and Soviet delegations now holding talks in Geneva. (See EPS No. 6)

NOTED that although no official reply had yet been received from the Moscow Patriarchate regarding the proposals made last August in Utrecht, Holland, when the first meeting was held between representatives of the Patriarchate and the World Council of Churches, it is expected that observers from the Russian Orthodox Church will attend the meeting of the WCC's Central Committee this summer on the island of Rhodes.

DECIDED to withhold formal comment on the recent announcement from the Vatican that the Pope proposes to call an ecumenical council. (See EPS page 3)

WELCOMED "most cordially" the decision of the United Nations to proclaim a World Refugee Year and reaffirmed that the World Council of Churches, "in addition to its permanent service will do all in its power to cooperate in any constructive initiative taken by governments to solve the problem of refugees." The committee said it also wanted to emphasise that "there are so many refugees, and such difficult situations, that their problems simply cannot be solved in one year," but hoped that "the problems of many more may be solved in this year than in any previous year and that the World Refugee Year may result in far greater attention to their needs in the years to follow."

HEARD that the majority of the replies received to date by the International Missionary Council and the World Council of Churches approved the proposed integration of the two world bodies and indicated that no radical change had been suggested in the draft plan of integration.

EXPRESSED "great appreciation" to the churches for the steady increase in giving for the work of inter-church aid without dramatic appeals and emergencies. During 1958, the hoped for amount of \$825,000 for the Service Programme, which includes all the work of the Division of Inter-Church Aid and Service to Refugees,





was oversubscribed. The 1958 goal was a \$75,000 increase over the 1957 total.

SANCTIONED an arrangement under which Dr. Hans Harms, associate director of the council's Division of Studies, will give part-time service as secretary of the provisional committee of the European Church Conference. The conference was held in Nyborg, Denmark, in early January and the provisional committee was authorised to draft a programme of study and future action. Representatives from 22 countries attended the conference.

VOTED to propose to the WCC's Central Committee that the number of delegates for the council's third Assembly in 1961, scheduled for Ceylon, be 600, the same as the Evanston Assembly in 1954.

EPS, Geneva

#### Committee Withholds Comment on General Council

(Geneva) - The Executive Committee of the World Council of Churches meeting in Geneva, February 9 - 13, withheld formal comment on the recent announcement from the Vatican that the Pope proposes to call an ecumenical council which, it has been stated, will have the furthering of Christian unity as one of its concerns.

Widespread interest in the subject was reported by the 13 members present on the part of the 171 Orthodox, Anglican, Protestant and Old Catholic churches belonging to the World Council in 53 countries. However, the lack of factual information about the proposed council made it impossible, in the judgment of the committee, to make any specific statement.

General approval was given by the committee to the words of the World Council's general secretary, Dr. W.A. Visser 't Hooft: "Much depends on the manner in which the council will be called and the spirit in which the question of Christian unity will be approached. The question is how ecumenical will the council be in composition and spirit?"

The view was unanimously expressed by the Executive Committee that the experience of the ecumenical movement, as represented by the World Council of Churches, indicates that "progress toward unity is made when churches meet together on the basis of mutual respect and with a full commitment on the part of each church to the truth of the Gospel, to charity and to a faithful interpretation of its deepest convictions". The most fruitful first steps in inter-church relations, the committee agreed, are actual cooperation among churches in service in working for a responsible society and a just and durable peace, in theological discussions, and in efforts to secure religious liberty for all people in every land.

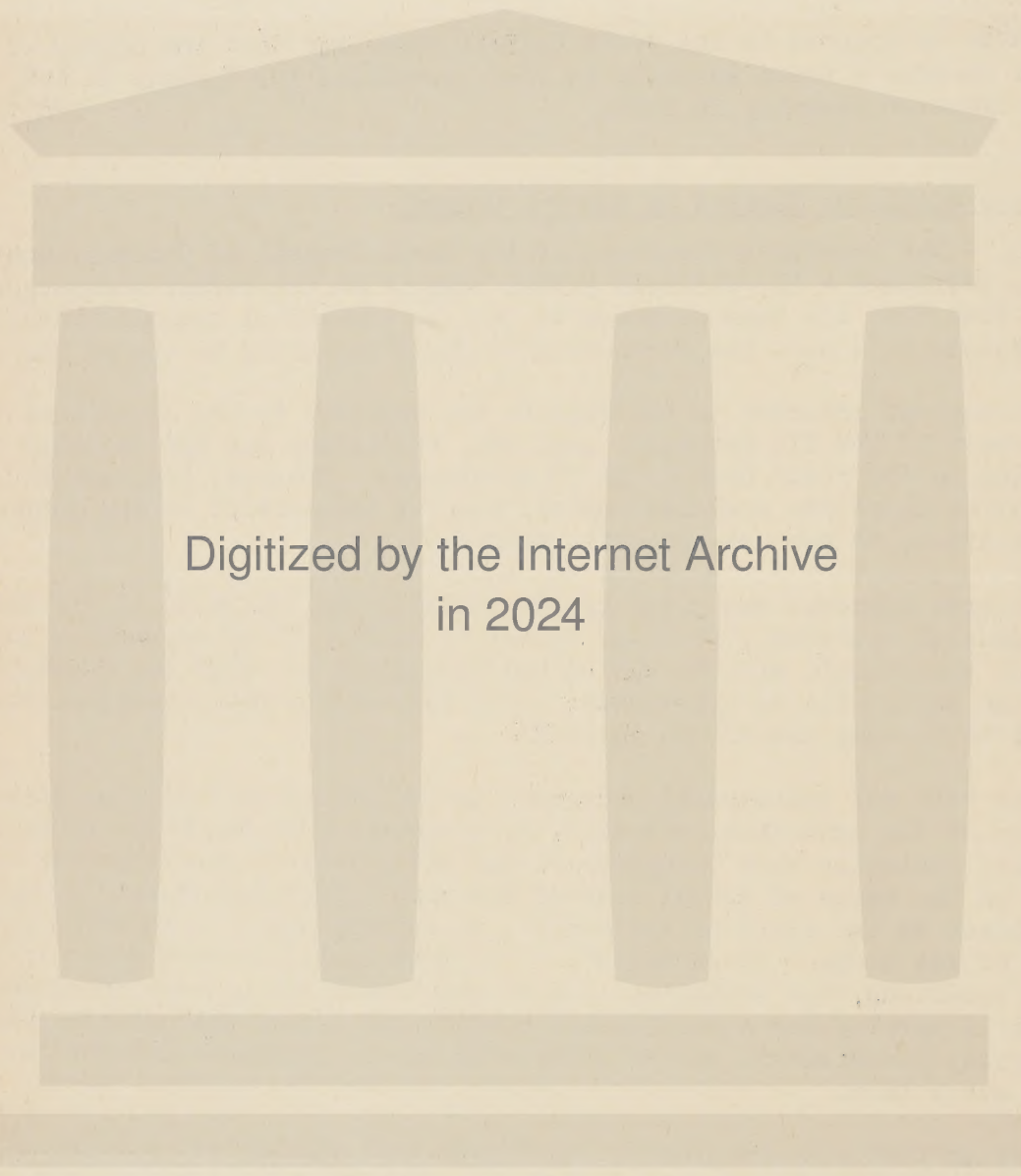
The Committee expressed the confidence that the member churches of the World Council will "continue to pray for unity as Christ wills it" and asked its officers to keep under review the implications of the developments in connection with the proposed council for the whole cause of Christian unity.

EPS, Geneva

#### Roman Catholic Convent Proposed for Sweden

(Sigtuna) - An application from the Roman Catholic Theresia Foundation to set up a convent for Carmelite nuns in Glumslöv, Sweden, is awaiting a government decision. It would be the first Roman Catholic convent in Sweden since the Reformation.





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"Church News from the Northern Countries," issued in Sigtuna, reports that the Swedish Advisory Council has opposed the move. However, the council says that if permission is granted, it recommends that it should be on the condition that the nuns become Swedish citizens "after some years"; and that, "in consideration of personal freedom", women who have taken vows can leave the convent if they wish without fear of punishment. EPS, Geneva

#### Greek Orthodox Archbishop Elected for America

(New York) - The Metropolitan James A. Coucouzes of Melita has been elected to succeed the late Archbishop Michael as head of the 1,150,000-member Greek Orthodox Church of North and South America.

Since March 1955 the Metropolitan James has been the representative of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople and of the other three ancient Patriarchates of the Orthodox Church - Antioch, Alexandria and Jerusalem - at the headquarters of the World Council of Churches in Geneva.

The forty-seven year old archbishop-elect was born on the island of Imbros, Turkey, and educated in the theological school of Halki, Constantinople, and at Harvard Divinity School. Now an American citizen, he was a priest and teacher in America between 1939 and 1955, serving as professor and dean of the Greek Theological Seminary, Pomfret, Connecticut, dean of the Hellenic Cathedral of New York City, dean of the Greek Orthodox Cathedral of Boston, Mass., and Dean of the Greek Orthodox Seminary of Brookline, Mass.

The new archbishop is a member of the World Council of Churches' Central Committee and in recent years has been a leading Orthodox spokesman at ecumenical meetings. EPS, Geneva

#### Theological Teachers Defend Fidel Castro

(Matanzas, Cuba) - The faculty of Union Theological Seminary in Matanzas has appealed for better understanding in the United States of the aims and actions of the new Fidel Castro government in Cuba.

In an open letter written by Professor Milton LeRoy, an American who teaches pastoral counselling, the faculty complains of misinformation and "false interpretations" directed against the new régime. "The express intention of the revolutionary leaders that this should be a model revolution, one that executes justice but does not seek revenge" is cited in the letter, which questions the "moral right" of the United States to object to executions of Batista followers. It is claimed that the United States has made no protest against "killings and tortures without trial" under the former Batista government.

The faculty members say that Fidel Castro and his collaborators are "striving for an honest and just government" and "have the backing of the Cuban people". EPS, Geneva

#### American Churches Oppose Peacetime Military Training

(New York) - The National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA has reiterated its concern for "adequate national defence", but renewed its public opposition to universal military training in peacetime.







The views of the council were made known before the Armed Services Committee of the US House of Representatives in Washington, which had called for testimony on proposals to extend universal training for a four-year period.

Reasons given by the council's spokesman included "the danger inherent in an overwhelming emphasis on militarism", interrupted education, the effect of the training programme on US foreign relations. The financial burden of maintaining the men under arms was also questioned.

The testimony in Washington reaffirmed stands on the issue taken by the National Council's General Board in January 1952 and March 1955.

The council's opposition was supported by the United Christian Youth Movement, one of its affiliated units, which represents ten million church young people in the United States.

EPS, Geneva

#### DDR's Catholic Bishops Call for No Compromise

(Berlin) - A letter from the Roman Catholic bishops and their commissaries in the East German Republic has urged Catholics not to sever themselves from their church by public declarations. The message, which was read in all Roman Catholic churches in the DDR and Berlin, urges church members to insist on freedom of conscience.

Catholics are warned in the letter not to make statements that they have left the church, "even when under pressure from methods which are unworthy of human dignity and contrary to the right of freedom of conscience guaranteed in the constitution".

The bishops also complain of pressure on young people to induce them to go through the Communist-sponsored youth dedication ceremony. They say the rite is incompatible with the Christian faith and must be rejected.

Referring to attempts by Communists to substitute "secular ceremonies" for the Church's sacraments and rites, the pastoral letter says: "After mature reflection, we make the statement that no Catholic can participate in a socialist wedding ceremony, the youth dedication, socialist name-giving, socialist funerals or any other anti-church ceremonies of the same kind without denying his sacred faith. There is no compromise between faith in God and the religion of godlessness."

EPS, Geneva

#### LWF Leaders Confer with Hungarian Churchmen

(Vienna) - For the first time since the retirement of Lutheran Bishop Lajos Ordass, Hungarian Lutheran leaders have conferred with members of the President's Committee of the Lutheran World Federation in an attempt to "clarify relationships".

The meeting took place in Vienna on February 14. Dr. Franklin Clark Fry, LWF president, together with the federation's executive secretary, Dr. Carl E. Lund-Quist, treasurer Rudolf Weeber of Germany, Bishop Bo Giertz of Sweden and Bishop Hermann Dietzfelbinger of Germany received Bishop Zoltan Kaldy, the successor of Bishop Ordass, and Professor Miklos Palfy of the Budapest Lutheran theological faculty. The Hungarian delegation asked for improved relations with the LWF following strain connected with Bishop Ordass' retirement.





LWF representatives told the Hungarian delegation that the Hungarian Lutheran Church would be "regarded as a member church with the same rights and duties as all other member churches". More inter-church aid action was promised, including help for church institutions. The LWF representatives asked to be able to send visitors to Hungary to help with the development of inter-church aid and suggested participation of Hungarians in exchange programmes and committees of the LWF.

EPS, Geneva

#### Bossey Graduate School Closes on February 14

(Geneva) - Forty-five students concluded their studies on February 14 at the Graduate School of Ecumenical Studies of the Ecumenical Institute of the World Council of Churches, just outside Geneva.

The four-and-a-half-month session closed with the Methodist Covenant Service, Holy Communion and prayers of intercession for each of the students as they returned to their churches. This year's student group, the largest on record, came from 22 nations and represented 11 denominations.

In his closing lecture to the students of the seventh Graduate School, Dr. H.H. Wolf, director of the institute, said he hoped they would not "return self-satisfied" but rather would "open doors for a new atmosphere and a new feeling to enter their own denominations". One of the main subjects of study in the graduate school session was "The Roman Catholic World". A different major Christian confession is studied in detail each year.

Professor Wolf cited some of the "expectancy" Christians felt over last summer's discussions of relations with the Moscow Patriarchate of the Russian Orthodox Church and the January announcement by Pope John XXIII of his intention to call a general council of the Roman Catholic Church. "But let us be interested in finding a right obedience in the Church of Jesus Christ. We pray that all of us may be used for the renewal of our churches," he said.

During the semester the students heard lectures on the Roman Catholic and non-Roman Catholic conception of mission, the Roman Catholic view of the ecumenical movement and the position of the World Council of Churches. Other subjects included the history of the ecumenical movement, an introduction to the theological thought of different continents, an introduction to worship and spiritual life in communities like Bossey and reports from various churches.

Students this year represented Lutheran, Disciple, Anglican, Congregational, Methodist, Presbyterian and Reformed, Orthodox, Baptist, United, Syrian Orthodox churches and the Church of South India. Twelve students - the largest group - came from the United States. There were six enrolled from Germany and five from Great Britain. Other countries represented were France, Formosa, Canada, Greece, the Netherlands, South Africa, Sweden, Cuba, Finland, Ceylon, Switzerland, the Cameroons, Spain, Cyprus, Madagascar, Denmark, India, Ethiopia, Poland and Turkey.

EPS, Geneva

#### Communist Ceremonies to Supplant Church Rites

(Stalinstadt, DDR) - The town council of Stalinstadt in East Germany has issued detailed instructions for the celebration of socialist ceremonies for births, marriages and deaths.

The atheistic emphasis of the ceremonies is laid down in a set of introductory





principles, which reject equivalent rites in church as inventions of the "exploiting classes". The "principles" say that the church ceremonies are "divorced from life" but the newly-issued forms are based on "socialist humanism, which is atheist and recognises no power higher than the human race as it works and struggles for peace, democracy and socialism."

The introductory principles also say the socialist state has the right to use the preparatory methods outlined in the document and conduct ceremonies to "influence parents, the parties to marriages and the survivors of deceased persons and educate them in socialism". The educational task is described as of primary importance.

Stalinstadt has opened an office to ensure that the new ceremonies are put into effect. The director of the office, which comes under the "Department of Culture" will prepare parents, fiancés and relatives of the dead for the rites and attempt to establish good relations between government officials and participants in the ceremonies.

Further meanings attached to the new rites are spelled out in the regulations. "The celebration of the birth and naming of a child" is described as "making the parents recognise that they are part of the whole nation and of its efforts for the future". The ceremony is claimed to be "the official introduction of the child to human society" when "the parents take a vow to bring up the child in accordance with the principles of socialism".

Civil marriage under the new code is said to "invest the decision of the man and the woman with the socialist ethic. They take a socialist marriage vow" and "the ceremony is to be public so as to emphasise the social significance of this personal event."

"The official burial ceremony" is called "an appreciation of the good efforts and actions of the deceased person. The mourners are to be comforted by a sense of proud satisfaction at having been connected with him. His death must stimulate them to fill the gap left by his having died."

Vows in the marriage ceremonies are exactly described. Addresses preceding the taking of vows must include the admonition that no one "can enjoy happiness outside life, outside the socialist world" and that "religion fails to protect marriage because God does not exist; the churches are impotent, because religion despises earthly life and because of the immorality of those church leaders who approve of war as God's instrument".

Press and mass organizations are to urge the public to attend the rites and underline their "social significance". While vows are signed "unobtrusive music" is to be played and participants leave the ceremonies to military march music. The stated aim of the music is to make the ceremonies impressive. EPS, Geneva

#### Germany's Union Church Resists State Pressure

(Berlin) - The synod of the Evangelical Church of the Union in Germany has taken measures to stiffen Christian opposition to secularising manoeuvres of the Communist state in East Germany.

Addressing the synod's opening session on February 7, the church's president, Pastor Kurt Scharf, said that the introduction of atheist ceremonies for births,





deaths and marriages in the town of StalinStadt had clarified the differences between church and state and consolidated the stand of the church. "Never before have we been so spiritually united at the opening of a synod and at a critical moment in history," said President Scharf (see also EPS page 6).

Following the synod the EKU's council will set up a commission to discuss the encounter between the Church and atheism and make recommendations. The report of the commission will be used as a basis for action at the level of regional church synods, pastors' associations and parish groups.

A leaflet has already been prepared on "The Gospel and the Christian Life in the DDR". President Ernst Wilm of the Church of Westphalia, in West Germany, said the aim of the publication was to lead individual Christians to a real confrontation with Marxism and especially with Marxists, as fellow-men "whom Jesus Christ visits and loves just as much as Christians".

A new order of worship was unanimously commended to the EKU's member bodies by the synod, but Bishop Otto Dibelius, who was absent at the WCC's Executive Committee in Geneva, told the meeting in a message that he did not favour the new order and regarded it as an attempt to put the clock back and "a retreat from the spiritual vitality which was bestowed upon us during the time of the confessing church".

A message from the synod to the "German People and the Great Powers" urged Germans to agree to controlled limitation of Germany's military potential, not to accept atomic rearmament, not to participate in the cold war and to see that peace and reunification cannot be gained without personal sacrifice. The message calls on the great powers to help the German people by granting them self-determination and the restoration of "unrestricted and legally-protected communication between all German citizens on German territory" as the basis for a peace treaty.

EPS, Geneva

### In Brief

Canon Herbert M. Waddams has resigned as secretary of the Church of England Council on Foreign Relations as from April 20, to accept an appointment to the parish of Manotick in Ottawa, Canada. He will be succeeded by the Rev. John Richard Satterthwaite, assistant general secretary.

\* \*

Eighty delegates from ten Australian churches attended the annual meeting of the Australian Council for the World Council of Churches last week at Menangle, near Sydney.

\* \*

Billy Graham was greeted by throngs of Australians when he arrived in Sydney last week to begin a sixteen-week crusade. Mr. Graham's plane was met by Anglican Co-adjutor Bishop R.C. Kerle of Sydney, chairman of the Australian Crusade Committee, and other committee members, representing the sponsoring churches.

\* \*

"Brasil Presbiteriano" is the name of a new paper published by the Presbyterian Church of Brazil in Portuguese. Edited by J. Mauricio Wanderley, the paper replaces "O Puritano" and "Notre Evangélico".

\* \*





Dr. Luther A. Weigle, dean emeritus of Yale Divinity School, has been honoured by Protestant educators on his retirement after 30 years as chairman of the World Council of Christian Education and Sunday School Association. Dr. Weigle was chairman of the Standard Bible Committee which produced the Revised Standard Version of the Bible in 1952-53.

\* \*

The Cuban Council of Evangelical Churches has gone on record as favouring the proposed integration of the International Missionary Council and the World Council of Churches, "provided the new organization contemplates the representation of the national councils so that national interdenominational cooperation may not be affected".

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For the first time, a woman has been given full responsibility for a parish in the Slovak Evangelical Church (Augsburgian Confession) in Czechoslovakia. Women have been ordained in the church for several years but until now have worked only as assistant pastors.

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The German Coordinating Council of the Hebrew Christian Alliance has appealed to German citizens "to take energetic steps to combat any signs of racial animosity, especially against demagogues, stubborn reactionaries and disturbers of justice and humanity".

EPS, Geneva

